

THE *REPUBLIC*

Outline and Overview...

The master plan ('project') of the dialogue...

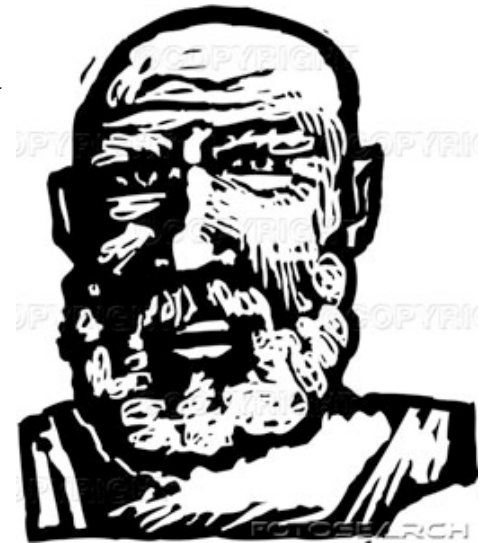
- » In this important dialogue Plato can be interpreted as presenting a sustained (and complex) argument for a single ethical thesis--namely, that *it is always better to be just than unjust*.

Book 1 – Stage setting...

- » Inquiry into the definition of 'justice' sets the stage for the rest of the dialogue. Socrates and his interlocutors consider *What is justice?* and *Why be just rather than unjust?*

Books 2 through 9 – Justice... the challenge and response

- » Glaucon and Adeimantus are a bit dissatisfied with Socrates' answer to Thrasymachus' claim that "it is better to be unjust than just"
- » Glaucon and Adeimantus thus renew (and strengthen) Thrasymachus' argument and challenge Socrates' to come to the defense of justice
- » Socrates' response involves "constructing" *the just city* as a means to understanding by way of analogy the notion of *the just person*. The strategy is supposed to help us identify both the *essence* and *benefit* of justice



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Book 1 – Stage Setting...

Raising the ‘justice questions’...

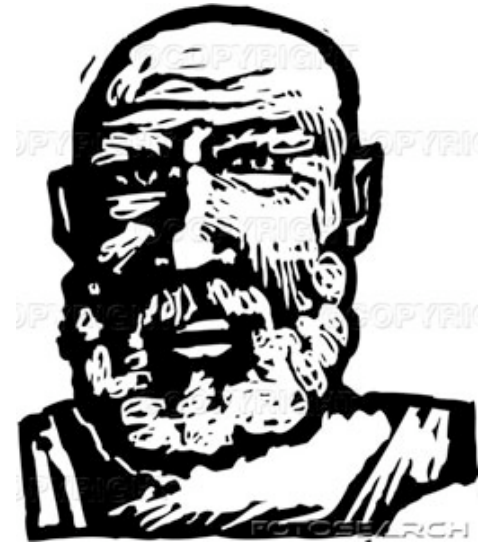
- » Book 1 sets the stage for the rest of the dialogue by raising what we might call the two ‘justice questions’

Justice Question 1 (JQ1) – The Nature of Justice

What is justice?

Justice Question 2 (JQ2) – The Benefit of Justice

Why be just rather than unjust?



Cephalus’ definition and Socrates’ response (331c-331d)

- » *Justice is* “telling the truth and paying your debts”
- » But, the definition is *too wide* (the ‘insane knife owner’ counterexample)

Polemarchus’ definition and Socrates’ response (331e-335e)

- » *Justice is* “helping your friends and harming your enemies”
- » But, a ‘just’ man can’t harm anyone... *not* even his enemies!

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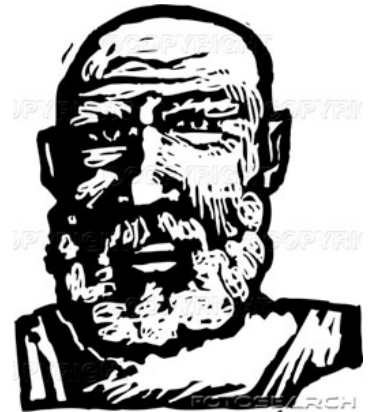
Book 1 – Stage Setting...

Thrasymachus' definition (338d)

- » *Justice* is “nothing other than what is advantageous for the stronger”
- » Socrates wants some clarification... “You say that what is advantageous for the stronger is just... What on earth do you mean, Thrasymachus?”
- » “Each type of rule makes laws that are advantageous for itself...”

Socrates' response – the *inept ruler argument* (339c-340a)

1. Justice is *what is advantageous for the stronger* [proposed definition]
2. Justice involves obeying all the laws [premise]
3. It is possible for rulers to establish *mistaken laws* [premise]
4. A mistaken law is *not advantageous* to the ruler [premise]
5. Therefore, it is sometimes just to obey laws that are not-advantageous to the ruler.
6. Therefore, justice is *both advantageous and not-advantageous* to the ruler



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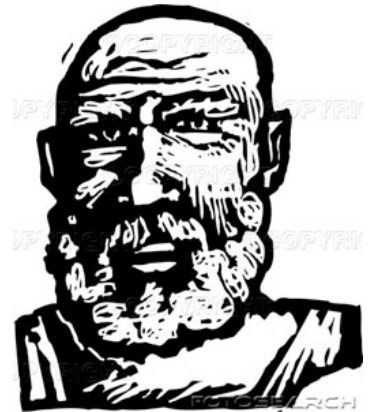
Book 1 – Stage Setting...

Thrasymachus' response (340e-341a)...

- » “A ruler, to the extent that he is a ruler, never makes errors and unerringly decrees what is best for himself, and that is what his subject must do. Thus, as I said from the first, it is just to do what is advantageous for the stronger”

Socrates' *justice is a craft* response (341c-342e)...

1. Every craft aims at the good of its object, not itself.
 2. Justice in government is a type of craft.
 3. The object of justice in government is the governed.
 4. Therefore, justice in government aims at the good of those who are governed, not the rulers.
- » “So then, Thrasymachus, no one in any position of rule, to the extent that he is a ruler, considers or instructs, urges, etc what is advantageous for himself, but rather what is advantageous for his subject—that on which he practices his craft...”



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Book 1 – Stage Setting...

Thrasymachus' *immoralist* response (343b-344c)...

- » “When we had reached this point in the argument and it was clear to all that his account of justice had turned into its opposite, instead of answering Thrasymachus said: ‘Tell me, Socrates, do you still have a wet nurse?’... You are so far from understanding justice... and injustice... that you do not realize that justice is really the good of another... what is advantageous for the stronger... and harmful to the one who obeys and serves...”
- » In other words, rulers (like other craftsmen) are only concerned about benefitting their subjects because doing so will ultimately benefit their own interests.
- » As such, the ‘just man’ (i.e. the one who obeys the ruler... and does what is advantageous for the stronger) will “always get less (i.e. be more miserable) than the unjust man” (343d)
- » The bottom line: *it is better to be unjust than just... for those who do injustice are happiest, while those who are just are most wretched* (344a-c)



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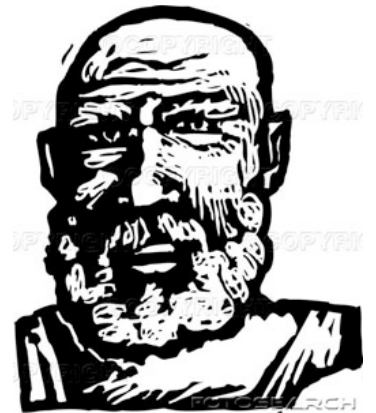
Book 1 – Stage Setting...

Socrates' *isn't convinced* (345a, 352d)...

- » “For my own part, I will tell you that I am not persuaded. I do not believe that injustice is more profitable than justice, not even if you should give it full scope to do what it wants... So we must now re-examine *whether just people live better and are happier than unjust ones*”

Socrates' *proper functioning response* (343b-344c)...

1. Everything that has a particular function performs it well by means of its own peculiar virtue.
2. The function of X is whatever X *alone can do* or whatever X *does better than anything else*.
3. What a soul alone can do or does better than anything else *is live*.
4. Therefore, the *function of a soul is to live*
5. Therefore, the *soul lives well by means of its own virtue*
6. Justice is a soul's virtue and injustice is its vice
7. Therefore, the just soul is the one lives well (i.e. *is happy*).



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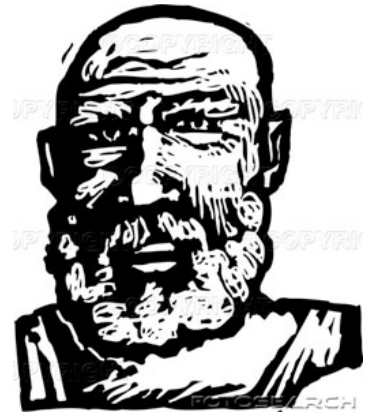
Book 2 – The Challenge and Response...

An unsatisfying account?

- » Glaucon and Adeimantus are not happy with Socrates' response to Thrasymachus' challenge and ask: "Socrates, do you really want to persuade us of this?"

Different kinds of goods...

"Tell me, do you think there is a kind of good which we welcome not because we desire its consequences but for its own sake; joy, for example, and all the harmless pleasures which have no further consequence beyond the joy which one finds in them?...Further there is the good which we welcome for its own sake and also for its consequences, knowledge for example, and sight and health. Such things we somehow welcome on both counts...Are you also aware of a third kind, such as physical training, being treated when ill, the practice of medicine, and other ways of making money? We should say that these are wearisome but beneficial to us; we should not want them for their own sake, but because of the rewards and other benefits which result from them" (357b-d)

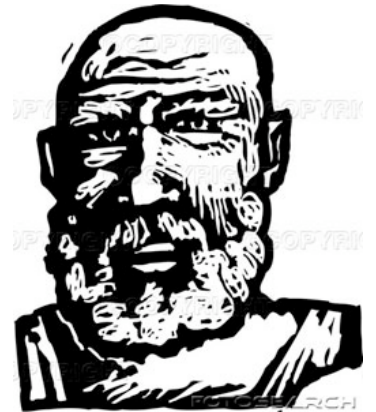


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The Challenge...

Renewing Thrasymachus' argument...

- » At the beginning of Book 2, Glaucon challenges Socrates to show (more persuasively) that Thrasymachus' claim—*namely, that it is better to be unjust than just... for those who do injustice are happiest, while those who are just are most wretched* (344a-c)—is false.
- » Glaucon thinks that this will be a difficult thing to accomplish since he thinks that most people consider 'justice' to be a mere *instrumental good*—that is, something that is beneficial merely in virtue of its “rewards and consequences” (357c).
- » Ideally, we would all commit injustice whenever it furthered our own interests. But since, as individuals, we usually lack the power to stop others from committing injustice against us, we accept the restrictions of justice as an agreement to secure mutual protection.
- » Glaucon develops this point with the “*Ring of Gyges*” story, claiming that if any of us had a similar opportunity—*namely, to commit injustice with impunity and acquire the greatest goods*—we would all (naturally) cast justice aside.

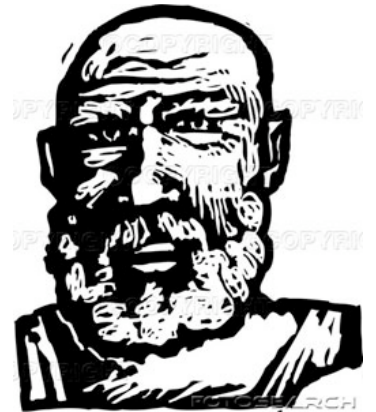


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The Challenge...

Renewing Thrasymachus' argument (continued)...

- » Glaucon strengthens the case even further by imagining the contrast between two individuals: one person who is actually just but has a unfortunately acquired reputation for being being unjust versus another person who is actually unjust but has (cunningly) acquired a reputation for being extremely just.
- » The first individual is imprisoned and tortured for his *apparent injustice*, while the second enjoys all the external benefits of justice *without actually being just*.
- » Having set out the details of the case, Glaucon challenges Socrates to explain why anyone (in their *right mind*) would prefer to be the first person rather than the second... In other words, *why be just rather than unjust? What benefit is there (if any) in being just rather than unjust?*
- » Socrates is being asked to provide an account and assessment of 'justice' (and 'injustice') apart from the benefits that most people associate with it. *In other words, the challenge is to argue for the inherent superiority of justice over injustice...*



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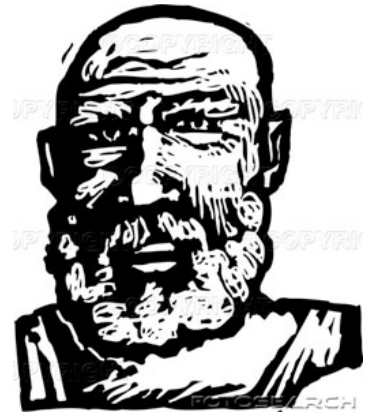
The Response Strategy...

A curious approach (368d-369)...

[Socrates] *“The investigation we are undertaking [in order to defend the benefit of justice over injustice] is not an easy one, in my view, but requires keen eyesight. So, since we are not clever people, I think we should adopt the method of investigation that we would use if, lacking eyesight, we were told to identify small letters from a distance, and then noticed that the same letters existed elsewhere in a larger size and on a larger surface. We would consider it a godsend, I think to be allowed to identify the larger ones first, and then to examine the smaller ones to see whether they are really the same...”*

[Adeimantus] *“Of course we would. But how is this case similar to our investigation of justice in your view?”*

[Socrates] *“We say, don’t we, that there is a justice that belongs to a single man, and also one that belongs to a whole city... and a city is larger than a single man... [right?]. Perhaps then, there will be more justice in the larger thing, and it will be easier to discern. So, if you are willing, let’s first find out what sort of thing justice is in cities, and afterward look for it in the individual, to see if the larger entity is similar in form to the smaller one.*



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The Just City...

What is *the nature* of the city?

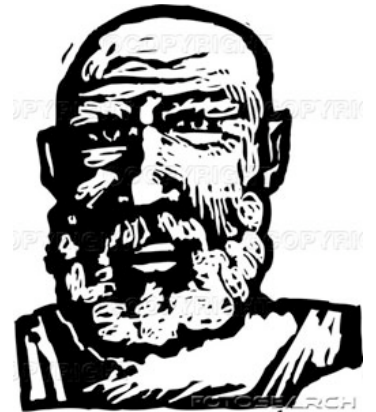
- » Since a city is formed out of need, a city will be best organized to fulfill its function under a natural division of labor such that each individual performs a single task for which she or he is naturally. The three groups in the city are: guardians, auxiliaries and workers.

What are *the virtues* of the city?

- » *Wisdom* (428c) is exhibited in the city when the rulers are exercising sound judgment. *Courage* (429b, 430b) is exhibited in the city when the auxiliaries are defending the city from its internal and external enemies. *Temperance* (432a) is exhibited in the city when the workers/producers show restraint and are in agreement about who should rule.

So, what is *justice* for a city?

- » Justice is exhibited in the city *in virtue of each part performing its own function... not meddling or interfering in the affairs of the others* (442c)
- » **As such, the just city is the *unified, ordered, harmonious, proper functioning city***



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The Just Individual (soul)...

What is *the nature* of the individual (soul)?

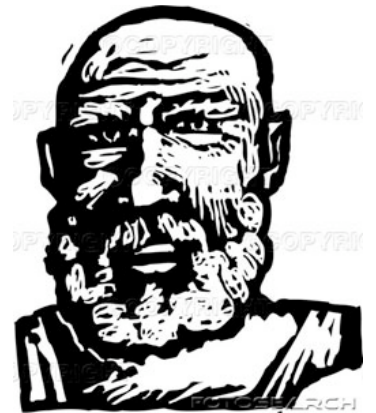
- » Since justice in the city is a matter of the harmonious arrangement of it's three parts, the same ought to apply to the individual soul, which is naturally divided into three parts according to its division of labor: the *reason*, the *spirit* and the *appetite*.

What are *the virtues* of the individual (soul)?

- » The virtues of the soul are supposed to parallel to the virtues of the city (441c-444a). So, for example, a wise soul is one in which reason rules and makes sound judgments (decisions) for the advantage of the soul as a whole (442c)

So, what is *justice* for a an individual (soul)?

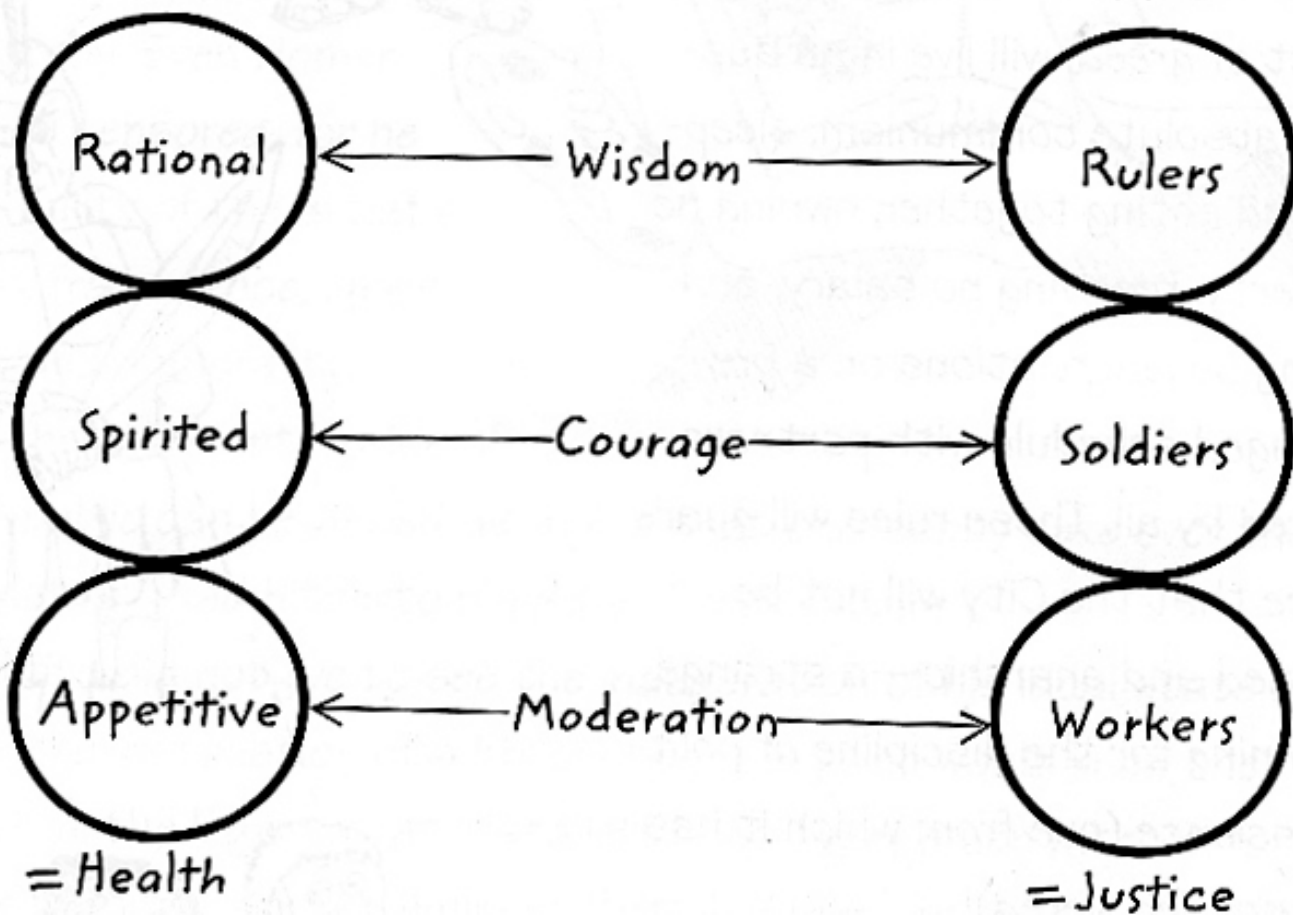
- » Justice is exhibited in the soul *in virtue of each part performing its own function... not meddling or interfering in the affairs of the others* (442c)
- » As such, the just soul is the *unified, ordered, harmonious, proper functioning soul*



THE
INDIVIDUAL

SHARED
VIRTUES

THE
STATE



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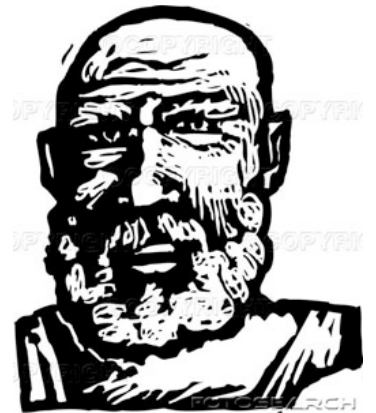
A Quick Recap...

Socrates' challenge: provide a sufficient answer to the following 'justice' questions— *What is justice? and Why is it always better (i.e. more beneficial) to be just rather than unjust?*

- » Contrary to popular opinion, Socrates must show that 'justice' is no mere *instrumental good*—something that is beneficial merely in virtue of its rewards and consequences—but rather a 'virtue' that has *intrinsic value* and is therefore something beneficial *in and of itself* as well as for the rewards and consequences associated with it.

Socrates' strategy: investigate the nature of justice and its benefit on the civic level in order to discover *by means of analogy* the nature and benefit of justice on the personal level.

- » A consideration of the (ideal) nature of *cities* and *souls* reveals a *tripartite (structural) division* of each entity according to a proper *division of labor*. When each of the three divisions is *functioning properly*—i.e. concentrates on their particular labor, not interfering in the affairs of the others—each division *manifests a particular virtue* ('excellence')



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A Quick Recap...

The virtue (‘excellence’) of ‘justice’ is that which is exhibited in both cities and persons (as a whole) when each constituent part of the entity is performing its own function and meddling or interfering in the affairs of the others.

- » In other words, the ‘just’ city/person is the *well ordered, proper-functioning, harmonious and unified* city/person.

City (<i>polis</i>)	Soul (<i>psyche</i>)	Function	Virtue
Rulers	Reason	Govern & direct	Wisdom
Soldiers	Spirit/will	Enforce	Courage
Workers	Appetites	Be governed & obey	Moderation

} JUSTICE

And since, according to Socrates, the ‘just’ city/person is the ‘healthiest’ (i.e. best possible condition) for a city/person to be in, it follows that justice—like health—is the kind of thing that is beneficial *in and of itself* and for the *rewards and consequences* associated with it.

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Some Important Assumptions...

Socrates' concept of 'virtue'

(V) The virtue of a thing T is that set of properties which makes T good.

- » To understand this, we need to understand that the value term 'good' is teased out in terms of properly functioning, e.g., the virtue of a heart is to pump blood, the virtue of the visual cortex is to accurately represent the world in the visual creature's direct environment, the virtue of a pencil is to write, etc.

Socrates' functionalist theory of 'happiness'

(FH) The happy life is the life of a thing that functions well or properly according to the kind of thing it is.

- » He defends (FH) with the following argument:

1. The happy life is the virtuous life
2. The virtuous life is the life well-lived
3. The life well-lived is the flourishing life.
4. The flourishing life is the life of a thing that functions well or properly according to the kind of thing it is.
5. Therefore, the happy life is the life of a thing that functions well or properly according to the kind of thing it is.

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Pulling things together...

How Socrates uses The City-Soul Analogy to answer The Justice Questions.

- » Socrates' answer to (JQ1): A person S is just (hence, the virtuous person) iff S is a properly functioning person.
- » And what is it, according to Socrates, for a person to be a properly functioning person (hence, happy)? The answer is this: S is a properly functioning person iff S is a flourishing person— that is, S's soul is well-organized and harmonious.
- » Socrates' answer to (JQ2): A person S has good reason to be just (hence, virtuous) given that it is necessarily true that it is in S's best interest to flourish.

The City-Soul Analogy Argument

1. The just city and the just person/soul are relevantly analogous.
2. The just city is just because its parts are well-organized and function harmoniously, hence, it flourishes.
3. Therefore, the just person/soul is just because its parts are well-organized and function harmoniously, hence, it flourishes.